

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE CITY OF ARLINGTON, TEXAS SKATE PARK MASTER PLAN

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OUR VISION: A SKATE OPPORTUNITY WITHIN REACH

Following the vision outlined in the 2004 Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department strives to provide a high quality of life through **great parks and exceptional recreational opportunities**. Our mission is to provide quality facilities and services that are responsive to a diverse community and sustained with a focus on partnerships, innovation, and environmental leadership. Arlington's reputation for innovation means identifying park design and recreation trends, and then determining if these trends may satisfy an unmet need in the community.

The SPMP was developed to create a framework for the future of skateboarding in Arlington. This is a "living" document that will have the ability to change and adapt over time.

The City of Arlington has a significant number of skateboarders and no formal skateboard park facilities. The lack of facilities results in increased pressure on public and private spaces by skateboarders who utilize these places for recreation. The safety of both skateboarders and other pedestrians is compromised by skating in unsanctioned regions of the City. The City of Arlington commissioned this Skate Park Master Plan (SPMP) to determine needs, establish a strategy for meeting those needs, and identify a location for the first skate park facility in 2012.

The SPMP team met with the public, administered a survey on skateboarding and user preferences, and reviewed park sites throughout the City. Through this process, a strategy was formed that will help ensure that current and future needs of skateboarders in Arlington are met by 2030.

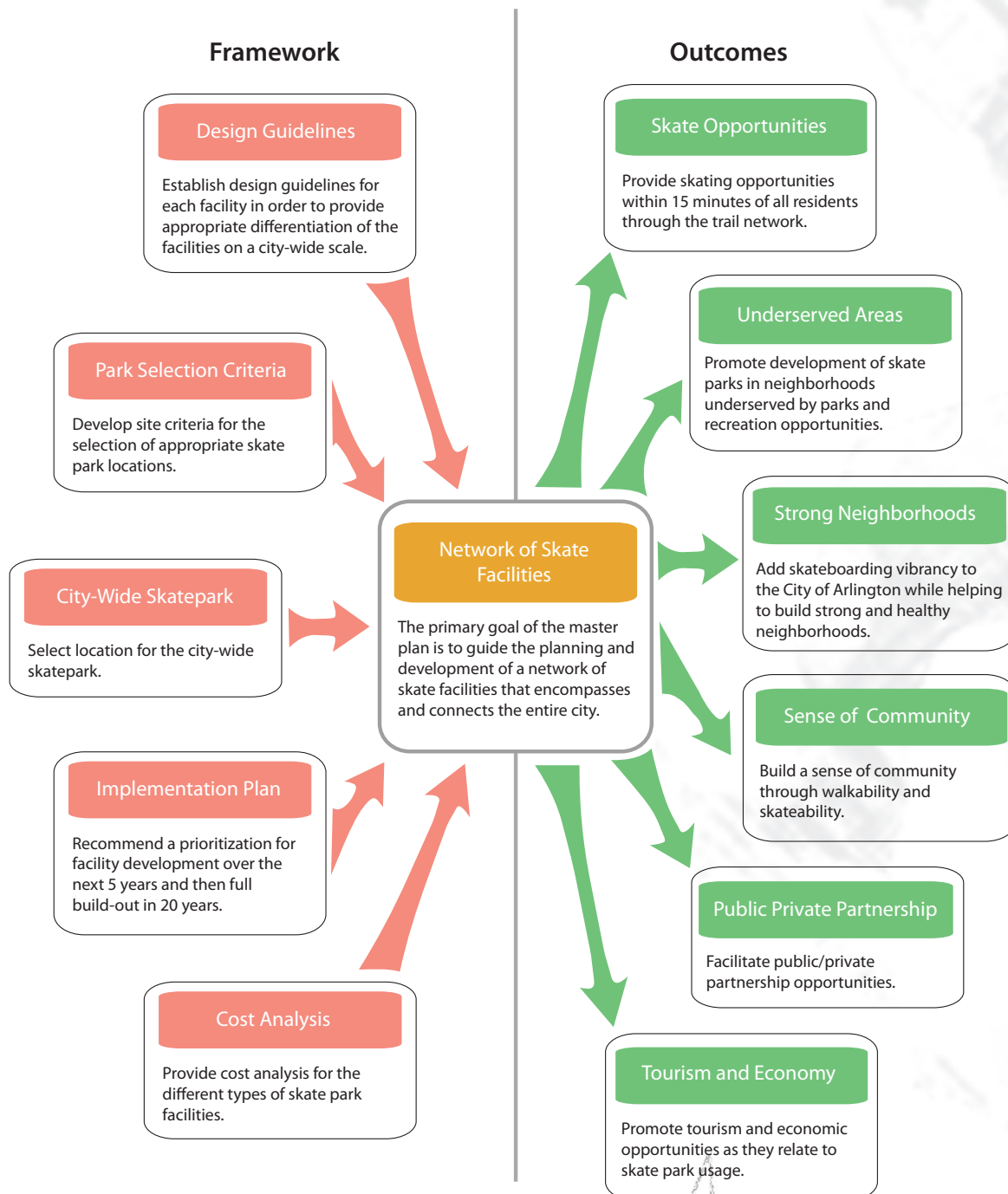
The SPMP provides a framework and strategy for building-out a network of skateboarding facilities over a 20 year period. When implemented, this strategy will ultimately provide an equitable distribution of facilities for all residents. The SPMP acknowledges the current lack of public transit options in the City, and ties the skate park network into the existing and future trail system for the City. Utilizing maps of the existing trail system and considering the existing and future hiking and biking trails, the consulting team prepared a strategy for building a network of facilities that provide safe access to sanctioned skate terrain within a reasonable distance of any trail.

A goal of the implementation plan is to have skateboarders access the skate system by travelling less than 15 minutes through the trail network. This strategy helps to support sustainable and walkable communities. By taking advantage of existing and future pedestrian routes throughout the City, the user group, parents, and spectators are encouraged to be active, to interact socially with others, and to help support the notion of more compact, walkable neighborhoods.



Goals of the Skate Park System

The primary goal of the master plan is to guide the planning and development of a network of skate facilities that encompasses and connects the entire City. In order to achieve this primary goal, additional goals were identified that help to establish the framework for Arlington's skate park system. Using this framework, the skate park network will provide numerous benefits to the community while creating safe, well-designed skate facilities that are incorporated into our existing parks and recreation system.



Addressing the Challenges

A number of challenges exist to increasing community connectivity: single-use zoning; natural barriers; large-scale housing developments; traffic engineering; parking requirements; and public approval process.

The challenge for any parks and recreation system is to encourage usage and community health through connectivity. A goal of the SPMP is to link with the hike and bike trails of the City and encourage usage through the existing and proposed trail system. By doing so, the user group is better served with safe access to new facilities. In addition, overall community connectivity and physical activity are enhanced through walking, biking and skating.

Achieving this goal has as much to do with perception as it does with reality. The SPMP attempts to achieve a more compact community and encourage activity through thoughtful linkage of skate parks and skate opportunities. The strategy for achieving a full network of skate parks is based upon walkability, and safe distances to and from participants' homes, schools, and places of work. It is important to bear in mind that skate parks will address the majority of the needs for skaters, however, some skaters will still feel the need to explore and travel to other places.

Assessing the Need

The Arlington Parks and Recreation Department conducted a survey to assess the need for skate parks within the community. Through the Spring and Summer of 2010, 468 residents responded to a formal survey. The survey responses provide a characterization of skateboarders, their families, and the current need for skate park facilities within the City. Using the survey results from Arlington residents, in conjunction with national statistics on skateboarding participation, the consulting team was able to extrapolate needs for skateable terrain and locations throughout the City.

The estimated number of skateboarders within the City of Arlington is currently 18,652. There are currently no skate parks in Arlington, and no legal places to practice skateboarding on public property. A large youth demographic is left with no place to recreate in their activity of choice. This has resulted in some travel beyond City limits to nearby cities with dedicated facilities (40.8% of respondents to the Survey).

In light of these circumstances, most skateboarders in Arlington take to the streets (67.5% according to the Survey), where they face disapproving looks, conflicts with local authorities, tickets for trespassing, and arrest.



Skate Park Advisory Committee

In 2010, the City of Arlington Parks and Recreation Department established a Skate Park Advisory Committee (SPAC) to help guide the master planning process and to provide timely feedback to both staff and consultants on skateboarding and skateboarders. The SPAC serves in an advisory capacity to City staff and the Parks and Recreation Board regarding the development of a skate park master plan. The committee is comprised of twenty-four (24) citizen representatives from all areas of the City who have diverse backgrounds (skateboarding community, neighborhood representatives, Park Board members, City staff, business owners, technical specialists, etc.).

Background

In the early 2000s, Arlington skateboarders began to regularly request the development of a public skate park. These requests eventually led to the inclusion of a recommendation in the 2004 Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan for multiple skate facilities of varying sizes.

In 2006, the Parks and Recreation Department began an intensive public involvement process to assist with the development of a \$15.5M bond package. After receiving input at more than 20 public meetings, the \$60M list of identified needs was narrowed down to the highest priorities. Funding for Arlington's first skate park was included in the project list. After receiving endorsement by the Parks and Recreation Board, a 35-member Citizen Bond Committee was appointed by the City Council to review bond project proposals from multiple city departments.

However, a last minute proposal was made to remove the skate park from the project list and utilize the \$500,000 for additional road construction projects. At the following week's meeting, more than 40 citizens attended the committee meeting to reaffirm their support for the skate park. This tremendous turnout convinced the committee to keep the skate park on the bond referendum. After endorsement from the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council, the bond package was approved by Arlington voters on November 4, 2008.



Public Process

Working with the Parks and Recreation Department, the consulting team of van der Zalm + associates, Newline Skate Parks, and Kimley-Horn, conducted three separate information sessions and public presentations on skateboarding and skate parks. These three sessions were conducted in geographically diverse areas of the City in an effort to solicit input from a strong representation of Arlington stakeholders. The first three public open houses were held:

- Wednesday, June 9, 2010, 6:00-8:00pm - Lamar High School
- Thursday, June 10, 2010, 6:00-8:00pm - Boles Junior High School
- Saturday, June 12, 2010, 11:00am-1:00pm - Bob Duncan Center

Interest was varied, with the largest crowd attending the Thursday night open house at Boles Junior High School. This response was consistent with the largest number of survey respondents from the southwest region of the City. Consultants, staff and SPAC, engaged community members in discussion about skateboarding, concerns for safety, and in justifications for the highest priorities for skate park development within the City.

In addition, the consulting team met with the public on November 4, 2010 to discuss the findings of the SPMP, discuss the overall city-wide network of skateboarding opportunities, and present the top two priorities for Arlington's first skate facility.

Once the draft master plan with individual site recommendations was developed, two final open house workshops were held on March 9th and 10th, 2011. More than 6,000 invitations were mailed directly to the surrounding neighborhoods of the 15 skate facilities proposed in the first five years of the plan. The final meeting was held in conjunction with City Councilman Robert Rivera's District 3 Town Hall Meeting.



Each of these engagements with the public helped to shape the final report (SPMP). Through a collaborative effort, the framework for a future skate park network was formed and initial priorities identified.



Skate Park

Master Plan - Arlington Parks and Recreation

Thursday, November 4

4:30pm Skating Demo
6:00pm Open House

Vandergriff Park
2800 S. Center Street

Help us plan a Skate Park system in Arlington!

The Skate Park Master Plan will guide planning and development of a comprehensive network of skate facilities to integrate with Arlington's park system and provide opportunities for a wide variety of recreational activities.

The plan will analyze existing sites for future skate facility inclusion, identify skate park types, develop site criteria unique to the city's urban environment and specify where and how many public skate parks would best serve Arlington.

For more information
call 817-459-5474
www.naturallyfun.org

Naturally Fun

City-Wide System

The SPMP attempts to provide opportunities for skateboarding at a number of scales, geographically dispersed throughout the City, thereby accommodating the most participants in close proximity to their homes. The SPMP is based on a Tiered Network Strategy with four distinct skate park typologies.

Skate Spot

A “spot” is a small opportunity that is created as a dedicated zone within a neighborhood park or along an established trail. It may consist of one or more features and encompasses an area no larger than 1,500 sq. ft.

Neighborhood Skate Facility

A neighborhood skate facility encompasses a larger area of approximately 1,500-10,000 sq. ft., and typically serves the need of a neighborhood. It offers users a single dominant type of terrain accommodating a particular riding style.

Community Skate Facility

A community facility typically serves the needs of three to five neighborhoods, and measures approximately 10,000-30,000 sq. ft. Formal infrastructure is often associated with this scale of facility and may include sport or security lighting, drinking fountains and sheltered areas.

City-Wide Skate Facility

A City-wide facility is similar to a community scale facility in that: the park may accommodate more than one riding style; it is best located in a geographically central location to the entire city; it often has formal infrastructure; and it is best suited in a mixed zone of residential, commercial and institutional land uses. This scale of facility may accommodate a wider range of riding styles, and ranges between 30,000-50,000 sq. ft.

Calculating Spatial Requirements

The consulting team believes that safe and effective participation can be accommodated in 8 sq. ft. per user. The required amount of skateable terrain for participants in Arlington is equal to 149,216 sq. ft. This figure represents the current need. When adjusted for the period of this report for anticipated population growth over the next 20 years (calculated from the US Census Bureau), we derive a total anticipated need of 171,494 sq. ft. - if participation rates remain stable (See Section 2.8-pg. 36).



These recommended sites were chosen to create a 'network' within the urban city fabric. Graphics are provided showing the average distances most skateboarders are willing to walk for each different skate park facility. These typical park locations are then mapped and overlain to ensure the entire skateboard population has a skate park within reach. An evaluation matrix was developed to help determine and rank each of the 30 parks chosen for consideration. Park locations that exhibited the greatest number of primary attributes were scored higher than park locations that did not achieve the primary attributes.



Prioritization of Development

Once a review of the selected possible locations was completed, the initial site selection process began. A survey was given to community members at several open houses discussing the options for this initial park construction. The options included a skatespot in Meadowbrook Park, a community level skate facility at Harold Patterson Sports Center, and a City-wide skate facility at Vandergriff Park. The community overwhelmingly selected the City-wide skate facility at Vandergriff Park. During the final public open house, possible sites for the skate facility were shown within the park and sample images of similar City-wide skate facilities were provided. Further information on this process can be found in Section 3.1 (pg. 49).

Network Build-Out

Along with the initial site selection process, a long term network build-out has been included. This build-out took into consideration the anticipated 171,494 sq. ft. needed by the City of Arlington skate community. Also taken into consideration were the current funds available from the City for skate facilities and how future funding could be achieved to meet all square footage needs. The First Five Years Network was developed to create a realistic goal for getting the master plan underway. It provides parks throughout the City while allowing for travel between locations to be safe and away from vehicular traffic.

The First Five Years Network will provide enough initial skateboard terrain to keep the growing skateboarder population in Arlington using their local parks. The Future Phase Network will complete the City-wide connections and reach the full build-out need of 171,494 sq. ft. In both phases, a variety of park sizes and styles will be created to keep all skateboarders interested and active. For further information, see Section 2.8 (pg. 36)

Future Opportunities

The SPMP is set within the current park system of the City of Arlington. Future opportunities within the park system may arise for skate facility locations that will need to be considered. Discussions have already begun for sites such as: the Entertainment District, Viridian, and the University of Texas at Arlington. These sites will be incorporated using the guidelines outlined in this document and skate facilities may arise if deemed necessary.



Management and Operations

Once these parks are completed, a system for maintaining and operating them will be implemented. The maintenance section of the SPMP provides information on common issues that may arise in some of the system's concrete skate parks. Common repair techniques, recommended hours of operation, and emergency information have all been provided to help keep each facility operating properly. Additionally, this section provides support infrastructure for each park type. Depending on the size and usage rate for each park, additional support infrastructure may be needed. This can include drinking fountains and on-site restrooms.

Liability

Doug Wyseman, a public sector risk management specialist, addresses the topic of liability in his book *Risk Management and Skateboard Parks* (Wyseman, p.2). He says that, “while there have been numerous injuries (most of which are relatively minor) related to skateboard use, there have been very few claims made against the owner of the property where the injury took place.” He continues, “certainly the claims experience from use of playgrounds, playing fields, ice skating rinks and other recreation facilities is far worse than that related to skateboard parks.”

The City of Arlington has determined that liability for skateparks is the same as any other free public sports facility – all sports are played “at your own risk.” Additional information related to Texas laws and skating can be found in Section 4.3 (pg. 90) of this report.



Recommendations

The following recommendations represent the groundwork for future facilities and design, however they do not preclude additional opportunities for skate facilities not identified in the Skate Park Master Plan. These recommendations will help to provide safe and legal places to skateboard in Arlington.

1. **ADOPT THE SKATE NETWORK TYPOLOGY SYSTEM**

See Section 2.5 for a description of the recommended typology system.

2. **ADOPT SKATE PARK SITING CRITERIA**

See Section 2.10 for the 17 site criteria used to evaluate park sites for future skate facility inclusion.

3. **ADOPT LIST OF RECOMMENDED SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT AS FUNDING BECOMES AVAILABLE**

See Chapter 3 for the types, locations and detailed analysis of the recommended sites.

4. **BUILD THE CITY-WIDE SKATE PARK IN VANDERGRIFF PARK**

Following the year-long evaluation process and details provided in Section 3.2, Vandergriff Park was chosen as the recommended site for the city-wide skate park.

5. **ESTABLISH A PERMANENT SKATE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The work of the Park Board-appointed citizen advisory committee was a tremendous help throughout the master planning process. Providing a permanent committee will help to ensure that new facilities are well run, that there is public support, and that the skate system remains responsive to changes and challenges.

6. **HOST PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR EACH SKATE FACILITY**

While seven public meetings were held and numerous methods utilized to gather feedback through the year-long master planning process, public meetings with the surrounding neighborhoods should be held in conjunction with the design and development of all skate facilities across the City to ensure that residents are informed and included with each individual skate facility.

7. **REVIEW AND UPDATE THIS PLAN EVERY FIVE YEARS**

As skate facilities are built and the network begins development, trends may change and challenges may develop. It is imperative that this plan remain fluid and the recommended sites and skate terrain need to be managed following these changes.

The recommendations provided by this report are based upon field review, extensive professional experience, public input and survey results. Through this process, participants and other interested stakeholders were invited to give their feedback on the potential sites throughout the City and to review development strategies and priorities.

